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ABSTRACT

This case study of two postsecondary schools in England attempts to assess the effects of a recently established and radically changed administrative structure and funding method on educational quality. These changes allowed schools to opt out of local educational authority control to become semiautonomous corporations and to create a separate funding entity to be operated by the schools themselves. The study examined two colleges: a "home counties college," which had formerly been a technical college and was restructured as a "tertiary" academic/vocational school, most analogous to a U.S. 2-year college offering associate degrees; and a school, defined as a "generalist" institution, a larger inner-city college that offered adult comprehensive education to mostly part-time non-degree-seeking students. Using qualitative data based on interviews with administrators, students, and faculty, the study found that interviewees perceived recent events very differently, with teachers tending to be more resistant to changes or tended to view changes pessimistically, while students tended to have a more optimistic view of change aligning them more with the view of administrators. The study also notes the difficulties of quantifying questions of educational quality, and asks whether performance targets are appropriate measures for allocating funds. The student interview questionnaire is appended. (Contains 27 references.) (CH)

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